Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A computer-implemented method comprising:

storing, by a payment service provider processor, in a database, for each of a plurality of payment processing debit options and credit options, a respective value for each of a plurality of payment processing factors, wherein the plurality of payment processing factors include at least two of (i) a cost of processing factor, (ii) a risk of processing factor, and (iii) a speed of processing factor;

receiving, by the payment service provider processor, a payment request to pay a payee on behalf of a payor;

determining, by the payment service provider processor based upon the payment request, a subset of the plurality of payment processing debit options and credit options applicable to processing the payment request;

~~determining an order of preferences, wherein the preferences include at least two of a cost of processing preference, a risk of processing preference, or a speed of processing preference;~~

~~evaluating a plurality of debit/credit combinations based at least in part on a first preference in the order of preferences to determine a best debit/credit combination, wherein each of the plurality of debit/credit combinations is capable of effecting payment;~~

selecting, by the payment service provider processor, one of the plurality of payment processing factors based on a preference;

determining, by the payment service provider processor, an optimal combination of one debit option and one credit option from the subset of the plurality of payment processing debit options and credit options, wherein the determination is based on evaluating a function applied to each of a plurality of combinations of an applicable debit option and an applicable credit option, wherein the function processes the values for the selected one of the plurality of payment

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processing factors for the applicable debit option and the applicable credit option for each combination of the plurality of combinations; and

~~effecting~~ directing payment in accordance with the optimal ~~best debit/credit~~ combination of the one debit option and the one credit option.

2. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the preference ~~order of preferences~~ is associated with ~~determined based upon~~ at least one of i) ~~the identity of~~ the payor, ~~or~~ ii) ~~the identity of~~ a consumer service provider with which the payor is associated, or iii) the payment service provider.

3. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

prior to selecting one of the plurality of payment processing factors based on a preference, determining the preference from a plurality of applicable preferences. ~~1, wherein each of the preferences is associated with a priority, and further comprising:~~

~~identifying one of the preferences having a highest of the associated priorities;~~

~~wherein the first preference in the order of preferences is the identified preference having the highest associated priority.~~

4. (Canceled)

5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the function comprises a sum of the values of the selected one of the plurality of payment processing factors for the applicable debit option and the applicable credit option for each combination of the plurality of combinations producing a total value for each combination, and wherein determining the optimal combination comprises selecting one of the plurality of combinations based on the total value for each combination ~~3, wherein the payment request is received by a payment service provider, and further comprising:~~

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~~determining if a consumer service provider associated with the payor has determined a
the associated priority of the preferences;~~

~~wherein, if it is determined that the consumer service provider has determined the
associated priority of each of the preferences, the one identified preference is the preference
having the highest priority as determined by the consumer service provider; and~~

~~wherein, if it is determined that the consumer service provider has not determined the
associated priority of each of the preferences, the one identified preference is the preference
having the highest priority as determined by the payment service provider.~~

7.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 6, wherein the <u>function is a first function, the
optimal combination is a first optimal combination, the one debit option is a first debit option,
the one credit option is a first credit option, and wherein determining the optimal combination
further comprises:</u>

<u>identifying a second optimal combination comprising a second debit option and a second
credit option, wherein the total value of the first optimal combination equals the total value of the
second optimal combination; and</u>

<u>selecting the first combination based on evaluating a second function using the values of
another of the plurality of payment processing factors for each of the first combination
comprising the first debit option and the first credit option and the second combination
comprising the second debit option and the second credit option</u> ~~preferences include the speed of
processing preference, the cost of processing preference, and the risk of processing preference,
and further comprising:~~

~~determining if the payor has determined the associated priority of the speed of processing
preference and the associated priority of cost of processing preference;~~

~~wherein, if it is determined that the consumer service provider has determined the
associated priority of each processing preference and that the payor has determined the
associated priority of the speed of processing preference and the cost of processing preference,
the one identified preference is the preference having the highest associated priority as
determined by at least one of the consumer service provider and the payor; and~~

~~wherein, if it is determined that the consumer service provider has not determined the associated priority of each preference and that the payor has determined the associated priority of the speed of processing preference and the cost of processing preference, the one identified preference is the preference having the highest associated priority as determined by at least one of the payment service provider and the payor~~.

8.   (Canceled)

9.   (Canceled)

10.   (Canceled)

11.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, <u>wherein the one debit option is one of i) a draft drawn on a deposit account associated with the payor, or ii) an electronic debiting of the deposit account associated with the payor</u>~~further comprising:~~
~~selecting a form of payment based upon the best debit/credit combination, wherein the payment is effected in the selected form~~.

12.   (Currently amended) The method of claim <u>1</u> ~~11~~, wherein the <u>one credit option</u> ~~selected form of payment~~ is one of i) a draft drawn on a deposit account associated with the payor, ii) a check drawn on a deposit account <u>associated with the payment service provider,</u> ~~other than the payor deposit account, and~~ iii) an electronic funds transfer drawn on ~~a~~ <u>the</u> deposit account <u>associated with the payor</u> ~~other than the payor deposit account~~<u>, or iv) an electronic funds transfer drawn on the deposit account associated with the payment service provider</u>.

13.   (Currently amended) A system comprising:
a communications interface configured to receive a payment request to pay a payee on behalf of a payor; and
a processor configured to<u>:</u>

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store, in a database, for each of a plurality of payment processing debit options and credit options, a respective value for each of a plurality of payment processing factors, wherein the plurality of payment processing factors include at least two of (i) a cost of processing factor, (ii) a risk of processing factor, and (iii) a speed of processing factor,

determine, by the payment service provider processor based upon the payment request, a subset of the plurality of payment processing debit options and credit options applicable to processing the payment request,

select one of the plurality of payment processing factors based on a preference,

determine, by the payment service provider processor, an optimal combination of one debit option and one credit option from the subset of the plurality of payment processing debit options and credit options, wherein the determination is based on evaluating a function applied to each of a plurality of combinations of an applicable debit option and an applicable credit option, wherein the function processes the values for the selected one of the plurality of payment processing factors for the applicable debit option and the applicable credit option for each combination of the plurality of combinations, and

direct payment in accordance with the optimal combination of the one debit option and the one credit option

i) determine an order of preferences, wherein the preferences include at least two of a cost of processing preference, a risk of processing preference, or a speed of processing preference, ii) evaluating a plurality of debit/credit combinations based at least in part on a first preference in the order of preferences to determine a best debit/credit combination, wherein each of the plurality of debit-credit combinations is capable of effecting payment, and iii) to cause payment to be effected in accordance with the best debit-credit combination.

14.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 13, wherein the preference is associated with at least one of i) the payor, ii) a consumer service provider with which the payor is associated, or iii) the payment service provider the plurality of debit/credit combinations to be evaluated are selected based upon at least one of i) the identity of the payor, ii) the identity of the payee, iii) an

~~amount of the payment, iv) the identity of a consumer service provider with which the payor is associated, and v) information associated with one or more prior payments to the payee paid on behalf of the payor.~~

15.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 13, <u>wherein the processor is further configured to, prior to selecting one of the plurality of payment processing factors based on a preference, determine the preference from a plurality of applicable preferences</u> ~~wherein:~~

~~each of the preferences is associated with a priority;~~

~~the processor is further configured to i) identify one of the preferences having a highest of the associated priorities, wherein the first preference in the order of preferences is the identified preference having the highest associated priority.~~

16.   (Canceled)

17.   (Canceled)

18.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 15, wherein <u>the function comprises a sum of the values of the selected one of the plurality of payment processing factors for the applicable debit option and the applicable credit option for each combination of the plurality of combinations producing a total value for each combination, and wherein determining the optimal combination comprises selecting one of the plurality of combinations based on the total value for each combination</u> ~~the payment request is received by a payment service provider;~~

~~the processor is further configured to determine if a consumer service provider associated with the payor has determined the associated priority of the preferences;~~

~~if it is determined that the consumer service provider has determined the associated priority of each of the preferences, the one identified preference is the preference having the highest priority as determined by the consumer service provider; and~~

~~if it is determined that the consumer service provider has not determined a priority of each of the preferences, the one identified preference is the preference having the highest priority as determined by the payment service provider.~~

19.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 18, wherein <u>function is a first function, the optimal combination is a first optimal combination, the one debit option is a first debit option, the one credit option is a first credit option, and wherein</u> the processor is further configured to<u>:</u>

<u>identify a second optimal combination comprising a second debit option and a second credit option, wherein the total value of the first optimal combination equals the total value of the second optimal combination, and</u>

<u>select the first combination based on evaluating a second function using the values of another of the plurality of payment processing factors for each of the first combination comprising the first debit option and the first credit option and the second combination comprising the second debit option and the second credit option</u>~

~~determine if the payor has determined the associated priority of the speed of processing preference and the cost of processing preference;~~

~~if it is determined that the consumer service provider has determined the associated priority of each preference and that the payor has determined the associated priority of the speed of processing preference and the cost of processing preference, the one identified preference is the preference having the highest associated priority as determined by at least one of the consumer service provider and the payor; and~~

~~if it is determined that the consumer service provider has not determined the associated priority of each preference and that the payor has established the associated priority of the speed of processing preference and the cost of processing preference, the one identified preference is the preference having the highest associated priority as determined by at least one of the payment service provider and the payor.~~

20.   (Canceled)

21.   (Canceled)

22.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 13, wherein <u>the one debit option is one of i) a draft drawn on a deposit account associated with the payor, or ii) an electronic debiting of the</u>

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deposit account associated with the payor, ~~each of the plurality of debit/credit combinations is associated with a rank for each of the preferences and wherein the plurality of debit/credit combinations is a first plurality of debit/credit combinations, wherein the first plurality of debit/credit combinations is a subset of a second plurality of debit/credit combinations; and~~

~~if the first plurality of debit/credit combination is identified as having a highest rank associated with the first preference, the best debit/credit combination is selected based on a second preference in the order of preferences.~~

23.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 13, wherein~~:~~
~~the processor is further configured to i) select a form of payment based upon the best debit/credit combination, and ii) cause the payment to be effected in the selected form; and~~

the one credit option ~~selected form of payment~~ is one of i) a draft drawn on a deposit account associated with the payor, ii) a check drawn on a deposit account associated with the payment service provider ~~other than the payor deposit account, and~~ iii) an electronic funds transfer drawn on a deposit account associated with the payor ~~other than the payor deposit account,~~ or iv) an electronic funds transfer drawn on the deposit account associated with the payment service provider.